

VA

Interview #1

Interview with Winfred Knowles
in Eastham, Massachusetts

by Angela Riedel and
Sadie Flint
April 9, 1981

Q: This is an interview with Winfred Knowles, known as Winny Knowles, on Thursday morning, April 9th, 1981, at his home on Bridge Road in Eastham. The interviewers are Sadie Flint and Angela Riedel.

When and where were you born?

Winfred Knowles: Born in Eastham, place. A little house just this side of the cemetery on Route 6, South Eastham. There's a picture of it.

Q: Is the house still there?

Winfred Knowles: Yes. Trees grown up. Drive right by and you probably wouldn't see it, but there's the picture there. The little house next to the rail fence.

Q: I recognize it. And did you live there all your life?

Winfred Knowles: I lived there till I got married, and that was

in 1913.

Q: Now back up. Let's get your date of birth first, before you get married.

(LAUGHTER)

When were you born?

Knowles: December 17th, 1892.

Q: That was a lucky day.

(LAUGHTER)

Knowles: Well, I don't know.

Q: And your parent's names?

Knowles: My mother's name was Nettie and my father's name was Freeman.

Q: And her maiden name?

Knowles: Walker.

Q: Was she from Eastham?

Knowles: Yes, I think so. She was born in Eastham.

Q: I just wondered if she was a native Eastham person too. And your father, of course?

Knowles: He was born in Eastham too. He was born in the big house right alongside of it.

Q: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Knowles: I had two brothers.

Q: Were you the oldest?

Knowles: My oldest brother passed away in 1925. My brother Henry. My brother George died, I don't know, just a few years ago. And there were just the three boys.

Q: So Henry was the oldest?

Knowles: Yes.

Q: And then George?

Knowles: Yes. George was two years older than I am. Henry was four years. He died very young.

Q: Are there any stories connected with your being born or how you got your name?

Knowles: I don't know if that's a story or not, but my name, I was named for three uncles. Uncle Win, Uncle Fred, and Uncle Jim. James. Winfred James, three uncles.

Q: So they honored everybody all at one time?

Did your father tell you very much about the Knowles family?

Knowles: I've got to say no on that. Your family didn't enter in those days, one way or the other.

Q: You don't know when they came to Eastham then, the Knowles?

Knowles: No, I don't know. I know my grandfather lived till he was eighty-seven or eighty-eight, when he passed on. I guess Knowles is one of the old-timers. Been for years as far as I know. That's what they used to tell me. There used to be a lot of them around, but there's not many of them left, is there, Sadie?

Q: When you think about what your parents gave you, you know, in growing up, what would you want to mention?

Knowles: What they gave me?

Q: Yes. What they taught you, what was important to them, that they passed on to you.

Knowles: I don't want to tell you all they gave me. (LAUGHTER)

Q: What do you think of?

Knowles: Well, as far as I know, they sent me to school and gave me a living. Until I was big enough to work. I only went to high school one year. They didn't go to high school as much in those days, because you had work to do. Everybody was a farmer.

Q: Was your father a farmer?

Knowles: He was a fish peddler to start with. He ended up as a farmer. He used to drive a fish cart. Drove from Eastham to Orleans and all around Eastham. Then he got into the asparagus business and farming, and all that land across the street, those

cabins, was his property. All asparagus beds. Everybody was in asparagus. You remember the asparagus, all over town.

Q: I believe I've seen a picture of your father's fish cart. I think Howard Quinn has one. It was a really neat cart. I remember it.

Knowles: So we went into that. Now, as to what he gave me. I can't pinpoint, outside of--

Q: A good solid bringing up.

Knowles: He give me an awful surprise one of these times.

Q: What was that?

Knowles: When I was a little fellow. You see, the three boys, they all had something to do all the time. My older brother, he had certain things to do. And George was the next one, he had certain things. And I being the youngest-- you know, they talk about burning wood. Sadie, you know. They had a wood pile wood stoves, you know, in the kitchen, and everybody had woodpiles.

But my job was to get our wood in, and make a fire in the kitchen stove every morning. And I forgot it one night, and about nine o'clock Father come upstairs and says, come on, get up and get dressed. For what? Go get your kindling. You didn't get it. I said, I'll get up early in the morning. He says, no, you're gonna get up now. And I was scared as hell of the dark. I wasn't

very old.

Now, in those days everybody had a woodshed and everybody had a lot of wood. They'd cut it in the winter, sheet it, put it up for winter. And I had to go way out in back of the house then. Good God, I don't think that's a shed in. .
Yes, it is. The shed's right back of that house. And in the dark. I never forgot it again.

Knowles: I'll bet you didn't.

Q: Where did you go to school? Where was the school that you went to?

Knowles: All in Eastham. All but the last year, was the Orleans High School. At that time, all the people here went to Orleans to high school.

Q: Was the school up where the Historical Society Museum is?

Knowles: There were three schoolhouses. South Eastham, Center and North Eastham. Now the schoolhouse up here in South Eastham was just the other side of Dr. Schneider's veterinary office. That house in there used to be the old schoolhouse. And the one in Eastham of course sets there now. And the one in NorthEastham was down where that-- well, I don't know, it's a fish market now, I guess, next to what was the-- it was a laundry when it started. Right there in the center there.

And went up there for the four grades. Then in 1900 that was

consolidated down in Eastham.

Sadie Flint: Winny, do you remember your teacher up there?

Knowles: Yes. Miss Doak . I'll tell you something funny about that. I thought it was funny. I was a little kid. Now, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Yes, she was the first one. Then Harriet Clark was the second one.

But this Miss Doak was quite a character. I guess. I was just a kid. But I remember one thing. She come to the house one day, to see my mother for something, I don't know. I can't believe I was a bad boy. What are you laughing at? (LAUGHTER)

And Mother was in the old chair there. And, you know, everybody had a chair there. You had a little stove and that's where you do the washin's. You had no machines then, boom boom. And as you go in there, there's a bolt in the jamb of the door. You put the hook over the bolt on the inside, when you want to close the door, see.

And I don't know what happened to her, but she got rubbing behind her against the wall there, you know, somehow, and she started going, she was hooked up on that bolt on the back of her dress.

Q: Oh, dear. That must have tickled you as a little boy. (LAUGHTER)

Knowles: Yes, I was a little kid then, but I remember her getting hung up.

Q: Do you spell her name D-o-a-k or-- ? Was her name D-o-a-k or k-e?

I wondered how you spelled Miss Doak's name?

Knowles: I don't know.

(LAUGHTER)

Q: That wasn't one of the things you had to learn, right?

Knowles: No. Then Harriet Clark, she came in. I think that was the fourth year, the last year I was up there. I didn't go to school one day, I had the whooping cough, and she came down and wanted to know why I wasn't in school. I've got the whooping cough. Well, she said, every kid in school's got it, so you might just as well come to school. She said, come to school and bring your medicine with you. And we was a-coughin' and whoopin'--

Q: It must have been a noise.

Sadie Flint: She stayed here in town, didn't she?

(TAPE INTERRUPTION)

Knowles: Well, do you notice anything wrong there?

Q: This is a picture of the South Eastham school, right?

Knowles: Yes. At that time. It must have been in 1899, because in 1900 we moved down here.

Q: The teacher isn't in here? No?

Knowles: I am setting on the end, the left end there. And I got the picture and I took it home to my mother, and my mother called

the schoolteacher. She was so mad. Before the picture was taken, I was foolin' around the old place up there, and I got three holes in my stockings. And in those times you wore long drawers, and there were three white spots showin' through in that first-- I didn't know it. I don't know if you can see it or not. Here, put a light on it. Maybe you can see it, Sadie.

Sadie Flint: Yes, I see.

Knowles:

Q: Can you see them? Those three little white spots on the leg? My mother thought that was terrible. Took them right out front. But that was taken in 1899, the year before we come down here.

Q: That's a wonderful picture. Is there anyone else in that picture that is still living in town?

Knowles: Well, I would know 'em all, but I can't see them too good now. All the kids. Archie Ryder, Lin Perry, and my brother. George Steele, Thelma Prence, Raymond Collins and Harry Collins and Fred Webb and Bessie Gill, Sadie Walker, Ollie Walker.

Q: How remarkable to have lived with people all your life that you went to school with.

Knowles: Yes, and I think that I'm the only one left. The last guy along the line.

Q: Well, thank goodness you have that one now. That's good.

Knowles: That thing's been around-- I don't know how many times I've moved, but that thing's always with me.

Sadie Flint: What about Harriet Clark? Didn't she marry-- ?

Knowles: She married William Knowles.
And Nellie Rogers married Fred ^DGill. They two came from Maine.

Q: So she spent her life here?

Knowles: I don't know whether Harriet's living now or not, do you?

Sadie Flint: No, she died.

Knowles: Now what became of the children?

Sadie Flint: Alvah lives in Schenectady. He came in to see me once, when I was in the Library. And Emma lives in Cambridge. I don't know anything more about them.

Knowles: And, of course, Nellie there and Fred, they don't have any children.

Q: Now, you went four years to the South Eastham school? And then you went to Orleans?

Knowles: No, I went four years down here. That's when they consolidated the schools. They moved from South Eastham to the Center and from North Eastham to the Center. Then they put the school buses in. They had four-- the first four grades were

primary, was in what we call the Old Town Hall. That's the little building on the corner by the lights. And those seats were put in there on slats, so when we had a Town Meeting, we'd have to take everything out, so we could use it as a Town Hall.

Now, that was opened in 1900, and I think in 1901 they voted to move the North Eastham School up to Center, and they put it on the west end of the school, right on the end, see.

And the next year they voted to move the one from South Eastham down and put on the other end. Then they built in the middle and put that door in the back of the school. That's what I questioned Mrs. Lowe about, restoring the old schoolhouse to the original form, but they haven't done it.

Q: And the one that's there now was the one they built between the other two, is that it?

Knowles: And Alice, she wrote a book. You've probably got one ^{building} of her books? And she was talking about restoring the old/- getting it back. And I said, no, we haven't. She says, why not?

You know, I'm surprised that Clayton Horton, who was a good carpenter at that time-- well, in the first place, when he got rid of the two school buildings, when he returned to finish, he didn't return it right to front. It was a ^{boxed} ~~botched~~ finish. You know, the . And on the front of that building, you get those little box on each corner, that comes down in what you call the box front, see. And

he put that straight down. And I come down Schoolhouse Road and I noticed it right off the bat.

Now, that door on the back's a good thing, but it wasn't there when I went to school there. That was a blackboard. They put the door in after they moved the two buildings. They filled in the space, and they put the door in so the teachers could go right in from one way to the other, instead of going out around.

So I said, that isn't the way it was when I went to school. They ought to have taken that door out if you're going to restore it to the original, and I said, I don't understand Clayton-- that finish is right straight down, instead of making the box turn .

Well, I don't know, they've got it that way and that's the way it is. But ordinarily, I think I could possibly say that I'm the only one that noticed it.

Q: That the box turn wasn't there. Did you ever say anything to Clayton?

Knowles: No, I never said anything.

Sadie Flint: What is a box turn?

Knowles: Well, I haven't got a picture of that. You take the picture of the schoolhouse as it-- the roof, that's a rake finish. You come down from the center of the board, right down here, and you turn on the corner. It's a plate built in about that long and it's about that wide. It's built on each corner. Now, you notice

it next time you see the schoolhouse. You can see what a box finish is. On the front. Then look at the back and see how straight it is.

Q: So there is one on the front, but not on the back?

Knowles: Well, they didn't have to do that on the front. The front was all right. They were shingling the roof and fixing it up and putting it back where it started. Did a good job on it.

But that building, in one sense, was not the same as/when I^{it was} went to school, because all the back of that school was a blackboard.

And, you know, some girls did an awful thing to the school-teacher one time.

Q: What did they do?

Knowles: She had a vase of flowers. You know how you used to take some little flowers to the schoolteacher, you know, an apple or one thing or another. And a couple of girls were kind of devilish at that time, and they broke an egg-- took the flowers out, turned the water out, and broke an egg in it and put the flowers back in. But the egg happened to be a rotten one. Oh, those two girls were terrible.

Q: You don't remember who they were?

Knowles: Yeah, I know them.

(LAUGHTER)

Q: You mean, they're not going to go down in history?

Winny's not going to be a tattletale at this point in life.

Knowles: I promised I wouldn't tell.

Q: Were you sent to the blackboard to do your work more than using paper?

Knowles: I don't know. I mean, probably it doesn't matter. It's a good thing we've got the door in there, as far as that is concerned, but when you see the original picture of what it was, that door wasn't there.

Q: I've always wondered when people used slates, and then when they began using paper in school? Which was used?

Knowles: Oh, that was before my time.

Q: They used paper more than slates?

Knowles: I don't know as we ever used slates when we went to school, do you?

Sadie Flint: No.

Knowles: And they put the eighth grade in there. We had a big graduation. There was seventeen of us, from the eighth grade, and the next year I went to Orleans to high school. And I don't know. I wasn't too much interested in high school.

Oh, we had fourteen boys in high school. We had a baseball team. They was all on baseball. They just had a baseball league.

Fourteen boys. I think I was smart. I only passed one study. That's the one I needed. That's the one that's carried me through life, bookkeeping.

Q: Did you learn that in Orleans in the high school?

Knowles: When I was going, that sort of stuff didn't sit with us, because, you know, fellows didn't go to school. Very few boys graduated from high school, for the simple reason the folks all had work for them to do soon as they got big enough. That was the same with me.

Q: Who was the principal? Do you remember the principal?

Knowles: Yeah. We had three in one year. And, you know-- Mr. Williams, do you remember him? He was Superintendent of Schools for years. Probably out before you got going up there.

Sadie Flint: No, he was there.

Knowles: A hell of a nice guy. A beautiful guy. He was a good teacher. And we started with him, and in not too long-- it went into the spring, I guess, early spring, when he got promoted to Superintendent, and I got along all right with him.

Then we had a guy by the name of Wells, who graduated from Dartmouth College, and he took over. Well, he was a fellow about six foot something tall. He was a big fellow, tall, and he was smart, for himself, but like a lot of things that-- evidently, he

didn't understand how to treat you. He could tell you anything about anything you wanted that way, but if you get something on the blackboard it was hard for him to explain it so you'd understand it and-- I don't know. And out of the five studies we had, it was Ancient History and, God knows, this and that. It didn't mean much to me at the time, but I liked that bookkeeping. I took that.

And then we got the baseball team in the high school league, and we had a game, our opening game was in Provincetown, at Provincetown. We used to have to go to Provincetown on the noon train and stay all night and get back the next day. Provincetown, boy! Stay all night and can't come ^{back} ~~up~~ till morning, hah?

And Mr. Wells didn't show up. He had a little rough time, and maybe some of the boys were responsible for it, I don't know. But we had Christmas vacation, and I guess the last day of school before vacation, the boys kind of kicked over a little bit. So when the vacation came, he spent two days lecturing the boys for what they did on the last day of school. That wasn't very good. We only did it for fun, but he took it serious. Too bad.

In those times, you know, most of the boys were wearing these leather shoes way up to your knees, you know. And he called me in when my turn came, and I went a-scuffing down the side of the room, and-- is that you, Knowles? I said, yeah, I guess so. He said, I thought it was a horse coming down the side of the room. I said, I can't help it if I make a lot of noise. You called me in, don't find fault with noise.

When we got ready to go to Provincetown-- this was early in April-- he didn't show up. He went out of town the night before.

Then we had an elderly gentleman I think by the name of Hughes, from Harwich. They got him to fill out the term. So that's three principals in one year. It wasn't because we were so bad. We were pretty good boys. Yes, we had to be.

Q: And the next year you decided to stay and work on the farm?

Knowles: Yeah. Father had asparagus coming in. And I took over his fish cart business.

Q: Where did you buy the fish?

Knowles: We used to get 'em in South Orleans. Now, that's kind of ~~plain~~ **STRANGE**, isn't it? Picked it up on the streets. That's strange too, isn't it?

Q: Where did it come from?

Knowles: You know-- you wouldn't know. You know where Warren Clark lives?

Sadie Flint: Yes.

Knowles: Well, a fellow by the name of Charlie Mayo , I think it was, he used to go fishin' out in Pleasant Bay, offshore. Had a big cat-boat. There was a number of boats used to go out fishin' for codfish, you know, and we had to drive up there nights

to get our fish and then come home and clean 'em up. As I say, Father had a good fish business. He used to go out three days a week and he thought he wanted to keep it and I'd take it over. But there was too much for what you got out of it, you know. Take it at night, drive all the way up to South Orleans and get a load of fish and come home, you had to clean 'em all and put them in and get them ready for the cart in the morning. And then you go out and you get some local fish, flounders or something like that, people want 'em dressed. That's too much. I didn't want that life anyway.

Q: And you had to have ice too?

Knowles: Yeah. I was pretty young about that time. You know, I remember some things. Mr. Downs? Do you know Mr. Downs, the cable man? Edgar Downs's father and all those folks?

Sadie Flint: Yes, I know.

Knowles: She wanted a bucket-- asked me if I could get her a bucket of quahogs. And I said yes, but I didn't sell the quahogs to her. They were twenty cents a bucket at that time. We sold quite a lot of them. And she'd given the order, so the next day I carried them in and charged her a quarter. She said, well, wait a minute. She said, you told me twenty cents. But I had to pay twenty cents. They went up on me. I used to pay fifteen cents and get a nickel. We sold them for twenty. When I got this bucket, he said he'd gone up to twenty cents and I have to make a nickel. Well, she said,

I'm sorry about that. She said, I'll give you just what you said it would be, twenty cents.

Q: Was that your last bucket of quahogs? It would have been mine.

Knowles: Well, she was right. And she was right. I was just a young kid. Better live to what you say.

Q: How long did you do this? The fish wagon?

Knowles: I did it about-- I started in the spring and I give it up in the fall. For a couple of fish, too much messin' around.

Q: How many horses did you have to pull the wagon?

Knowles: Oh, I had one. Just one to pull the cart. So then I don't know what the devil I did. Just went to work for Father on the farm more than anything I know. I wasn't much of a farmer either. I always had hard luck when I start farming, unless I'm working for someone. But that's the way it goes.

Q: How much land did he farm with his asparagus?

Knowles: I had a lot of-- I was interested in more damn things in this world than most people. That's why I say, a jack of all trades and not good at any of 'em.

Q: Well, then after that, you went from the farm to-- how long did you stay to do that?

Knowles: Yeah, I worked around there and I went out to work on

farms and work on asparagus beds. I used to go substituting on the Life-Saving Station years ago. And I did a lot of different things.

Q: Now that sounds like something it would be fun to hear about, the Life-Saving Station. Where was it, number one?

Knowles: Right on Nauset. You know where the new one, the big one, is?

Q: Yes.

Knowles: Well, where this one set is about six hundred feet offshore. Washed out.

Q: How long ago was it washed out?

Knowles: Well, it's been over the years. In 1916, when the government took over the Coast Guard. And that station was set-- as you go up now and get right to the top of that hill, it was right straight off from that, you know. Way off. That was way out. Now, if you wanted to go down to the beach, you went up the hill and you went down between the Coast Guard Station and the bank, right straight down. That's a long time ago.

Now, at that time-- I was, I think, just seventeen. All the boys, all the youngsters went substituting, because at that time they had so many men on there as a crew, and if one of them was absent for one day, there had to be a substitute. They had to carry that number of men, see.

Then when the government took it over in 1916, then they took over the substituting. And I used to be-- I worked into Number One Sub. That's the first call.

Q: What kind of training did you have for that?

Knowles: I didn't have any.

Q: Just went down and learned on the job?

Knowles: Yep. You didn't have to, because you were a substitute. You didn't have to know any of that stuff, but it was interesting. I went down, I was down there-- you know Reuben Hopkins , what's his brother's name there that died?

Sadie Flint: Dick. Richard.

Knowles: Well, one of them-- I was down there all winter. He walked over the bank. Fell over the bank in front of the station. Now that was quite a walk from the Life-Saving Station to the edge of the bank. Now you had a team right in front of you, and from there out to the edge-- it was in early winter, when he fell over the bank and sprained both ankles, and I was down there all winter.

So I studied the semaphore and all that stuff, those signs that they have for ocean launching. That's where you got your training on that stuff.

Sadie Flint: And you had to walk the beach?

Knowles: Oh sure, you're walking. Now, the north patrol was four

miles and a half. Will Gross was on there. Wilbur Chase,
Warren Daniels , Lew Collins, Win Higgins.
And I was filling in as substitute.

I had the first watch. See, there's five-hour watches, because we had nine miles, four miles and a half beach going north. That's going toward Provincetown. And I said, how are you going to know when you get there? Will Gross says, that's easy enough. You walk and you walk and you walk. When you think you're there, you turn around and look back. Then you walk just as far again. And you do that several times. Finally, you'll find a post, and then you go up over a hill. Why we went up over a hill, Sadie, was next to a wireless station. Then we'd go down by the wireless station and you had to walk way out there. You'd carry a little brass check. . There was a little house out there halfway. No, it wasn't halfway, because it was four miles and a half from Eastham and three from Wellfleet up.

But you'd put that little check in there. Then you take the one that's in there, take it back, so it proved you were way out there.

And then the walk to the harbor was three miles to the watch-house. You had a clock down there and you had to punch the clock. But the key was way down there, three miles, so we had to walk down there.

Of course, after the Coast Guard come, they only walked
. They used to go in cars.

So Harvey Moore years ago, he was a young fellow, and Bernie Collins's father, Lew Collins, was quite a character. Buh-buh-buh-buh, he had a lot to say.

And he was telling about Harvey was a young guy, doing substituting, and Collins would say how long he walked the three miles down there and back, you know, and how quick he could do it. So Harvey tried to duplicate, do it the same. Harvey said, you must have walked fast.

So Harvey said, I got it one night and, he says, I run. He said, I took the inside of the beach. Instead of walking on the outside, I go down the inside. He said, I run down and I run all the way back.

And the next morning, when we sit down for breakfast, Collins said, "How did you do last night, Harvey?" Harvey said, I duplicated your time. He says, I run down and I run back. Lew Collins said, "Wonderful. I used to ride horseback." (LAUGHTER)

Q: It didn't matter whether you walked or rode horseback then?

Knowles:

Q: Now, this meant that the beach was covered, how many times a day did somebody do the walking?

Knowles: Well, you patrolled nights. You didn't patrol in the

daytime unless it was foggy. If it was foggy, you'd have to patrol in the daytime.

But you started-- the first watch, I think it was a long walk. It was a five-hour patrol, because you had four miles and a half to walk to make it.

Sometimes you'd go out there and get so damned disgusted, like everything else, you know. Bright moonlight, and of course you could see down to the harbor. And you got a clock hanging on you. You've got to go down and wind this cussed thing. You've got to punch it, you'd better punch it, because if you didn't you'd lose your liberty. That was your punishment. When they took out the slates, it showed just what time you punched it.

So I got on watch the same way, I thought I'd missed the punch one night. So I said to the captain the next morning, I think I missed the punch last night. And-- what's the matter? I said, I don't know, I guess I forgot some damn thing. I probably napped a little.

And he said, well, I'll tell you what to do. When you go up in the watch-house, you take so many matches. You've got to punch that clock every half hour, so you put so many matches, how many points. Now if you're up there two hours, every half hour, you have four punches, you put two matches on the shelf beside the clock. And when you go to punch it, you move the match on the other side, and you'll never forget. But I'd punch it, but

both of them, pretty close to mine.

Q: Did you ever find anybody, patrolling yourself?

Knowles: Did I what?

Q: Did you ever find anyone that was in need?

Knowles: No. No. There was some vessels out, signals out. But they had a bad storm, and the Portland, when that went down years ago, there was a lot of people that was drowned and lost. And Bernard-- Lew Collins, that's Bernard's father-- was walking the beach patrol, going toward the harbor, and as he stepped, like that, something went between his legs. And he looked down and it was a dead man. And there was a tide coming in. And they used to pick up, at that time, because a lot of people were lost on the old Portland--

Sadie Flint: What year was that?

Knowles: God, that was before my time. What the hell was the name of that? It went out of Boston.

Sadie Flint: The Portland.

Knowles: Yes, that's right, going to New York. A bad storm.

Q: Now this was before the canal was built?

Knowles: Oh, yes. Yes.

Q: The canal must have made quite a difference in shipping.

(DOORBELL INTERRUPTION)

Q: The date when the ship went down, the Portland?

Knowles: I don't know. I wouldn't dare say.

Sadie Flint: I think '98.

Knowles: Could be '98.

Q: When was the canal built? It changed shipping a lot. You didn't have as many wrecks then.

Knowles: Oh, God, no.

Q: I'm sure that's known. It's not a problem.

Sadie Flint: I think it was 1912.

Knowles:

Ø: You don't remember that, Sadie.

Sadie Flint: I went to the dedication of it. I think it was 1912.

Knowles: I don't know. I was working-- Henry Clark and I was working carpentering together, and we had a job up in Bert Nickerson's, the old property up in Bourne. And we went up there to redecorate and paint. I took the painting job. Henry had the carpentering work. And I know we walked over the Bourne Bridge the night before the dedication. That is, the dedication was set for the next day. And that night we walked over the bridge for a bottle of beer. Way over to Buzzards Bay.

So we lived right there. I did all the painting inside and

this fellow did the carpentering and all that work. And a young couple just married and, boy, we had the best couches to sleep on and we had a cookstove, we had a lot of stuff in there, you know.

Went down to the store on the corner there and thought we'd get a little steak for dinner. Asked for two pounds. They said, two pounds of steak? That's a lot of steak, isn't it? For one fellow? I said, no, I have a partner. Well, it's a lot of steak for two people, two pounds of steak. Well, I said, what do you think it ought to be? Will a pound be enough? I didn't know anything about buying steaks.

Q: Was that the only time you lived away from Eastham?

Knowles: No, I've been all over the lot. I was being out of Eastham doing defense work. I lived in North Truro for three years. I was working in the engine room, as fireman down there, and

Q: Now, where would that be?

Knowles: North Truro Cold Storage. And when the war broke out, I went in-- and I went out together. We went to Newport, Rhode Island. We went to Otis Air Base and from there to Newport, Rhode Island, Quonset, Naval Quonset. We finally ended up in Hingham for a year and a half in a steel mill.

Q: You worked for defense? You weren't in the service? You were working for defense?

Knowles: Well, I worked in carpentry till that time.

Good God, I had to

I worked in Wellfleet a lot, because Reggie Moulton -- you know him, or did know him, he's dead now, I guess. And he had some trouble with Miss Freeman down there. She's the only real estate one in Wellfleet in those times. She'd get all the jobs and he'd get all the work, and he got mad at her and quit and I took over. And I built two houses down there and then I had it on the book for two more.

And then the war was on, you know, so we went to work-- all the carpenters there went to work and bought a lot of material, like zinc and screens and nails and things you would need, thinking the war was on and we wouldn't get it. Then we'd get a letter from the government, return everything that we had. Finish what you're doing. Christ, when we finished that place, you couldn't even buy a half a pint of paint. You couldn't buy anything, as far as work was concerned.

So Reggie come along one day and he says-- Dick Hopkins was workin' up there. He'd been talking to Dick. He says, come on up to Newport. So we packed up and went up there to Newport for quite a while in the Naval Station. Then we ducked around from there to
and I find there was another

. Boy, the yachts, the beautiful boats they had down there. We built docks down in there for the government. Then we went back to Quonset and finally ended up in Hingham, where we worked in the steel mill.

Q: Did you like living off Cape or did you miss it a lot?

Knowles: I liked the Cape pretty well. I don't know of any other places-- safest place in the world as far as I'm concerned.

Q: While we're talking about World War II, do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked that Sunday night?

Just curious. Most people have a memory of how they felt at that time.

Knowles:

Q: Do you have any memories of World War One?

Knowles: Well, I where World War One is concerned. I put it this way. I was too young for that one and too old for the other one.

Q: Lucky. Very lucky.

Knowles: No, but World War One I was on what they called the 4-F. I was married and they put you on the tail end of the line. That's where I like to ride, on the tail end. I got my training there stealing rides on the train. I'd always jump on the back end and steal a ride.

Q: When did you do that?

Knowles: Oh, that's when we were kids, youngsters around the depot,

waiting till the train comes. You know, we used to go to Orleans for that. Live down here and come up-- I lived in South Eastham and we'd walk up to Orleans and come down to Eastham on the train. The train would get into here from Boston twenty minutes of eight. It cost five cents a ticket. So we all bought a ticket, just in case. In case we got caught stealing a ride on the back end. We got a ticket, what are you talking about? And when the train came on, we'd jump on the back step and there we set. Ride on, get on to Eastham and jump off. That's terrible, wasn't it?

Q: No, I think it was like fun and dangerous. (LAUGHTER)

Knowles: That was terrible. Well, I mean that wasn't just honest to railroad people. Five cents for a ride from here to Orleans. But we had a lot of fun stealing rides.

Q: I would think it would be a laugh. Did you ever go anywhere else? Besides Orleans? I mean, wherever the railroad went? Did you go to Provincetown for fun?

Knowles: I worked on the railroad. I worked on what they call-- they call it maintenance now. It was a section gang then. We had ten miles of track, from Orleans to Wellfleet. I worked on that for a while. I used to work relief work as station agent, when he was sick. He was an elderly gentleman.

You know, that's what I said. I had so many jobs.

Q: It sounds fascinating. Did you have one of those little

handcarts that you lifted off the tracks?

TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

Q: Did they run on coal and steam? What was the railroad like?

Knowles: Why, I had to keep the tracks up that the trains run on. As I say, they called it maintenance. Then it was just section gangs. And there were about eight men that worked on that all the time. When I started on the railroad, it was just when they got rid of that handgear thing. We used that a couple times when the engine broke down.

And from there I went to substituting. That's what I mean, there's so many things that it's hard work to tell what you've been doing. I never stayed too long in a job.

Q: You just sampled a lot of them.

Knowles: I was just looking for something different.

Q: I understand that.

Knowles: I guess the longest job, to start with, was five years. I worked for the Ward Baker Company, salesman. I worked from Hyannis to Provincetown. Worked at that job five years.

Q: What was your form of transportation then?

Knowles: Trucks.

Q: You drove a truck?

Knowles: I drove a truck.

Q: That would be in the twenties?

Knowles: Yes. It was selling and delivering.

Q: I didn't get the name of the company.

Knowles: Ward Baking.

Q: I have a book called ENTERING EASTHAM, by Anne .

I see, this is a book about Eastham. The text is by Noel Beyles.

I was reading from a clipping on the front that was different.

Knowles: The picture down in the corner there. I'm on my knees
. They're asking me, what was the
name of the cat.

Q: I see in this book that you were many things in Eastham. Before we get to that, I'd love to know about when you got married and how you met your wife and that sort of thing.

Knowles: That was quite interesting. I met her in 1909, and I didn't know what the hell . When they consolidated schools. She lived down here and I lived up there. And we met at the first recess. Was it a fifteen-minute recess

they used to give us, Sadie?

Sadie Flint: Yes.

Knowles: Something like that. And you know those days, youngsters, you know, they'd tell, you got a little girl friend, or you'd say, you got a little boy friend. I was quite young. I was ten years old. I met her at that recess.

Now I don't know who, but somebody kind of got us to like each other, and ^{seventy eighty} ~~seven~~ or ~~eight~~ years later she passed away.

Q: You were always sweethearts then, from the time you were ten?

Knowles: She was always my girl and I was always her boy friend. All but the summers. Summertime we played hookey a little bit. We both played the same game, so you couldn't find fault with that.

Q: And her name?

Knowles: Alta.

Q: Her maiden name?

Knowles: Alta Horton Nickerson. My God, Sadie, it doesn't seem possible she's been gone nine years. My God, where does the time go? You get to talking about something, you say a couple of years and you find out it's more.

Q: And you said you were married in 1913?

Knowles: Yes. April 6th. Now, that's funny, that bunch of flowers there, that's been our anniversary. '68, our sixtieth. And the ~~Man~~ came and got it without . Didn't have a bud on it.

Sadie: Oh? Pretty now.

Knowles: Today's what, the 9th? That's three days ago. That thing without a bud on it. And they told her, if you want it-- but if you put it outdoors now, it may be some little time before the blossoms come out, but you keep it in the house a couple days. They're going to take it down this afternoon. Now those have come on.

Q: It's a lovely pink hyacinth. Well now, you had how many children?

Knowles: I had three.

Q: Three children. And their names?

Knowles: Had two girls, Mim, William and Jean. And our son died quite young. He was born in 1914. Mim is sixty-two and Jean's fifty. She works up in the Orleans office and has her hands full.

Q: They've spent all their lives on the Cape as well?

Knowles: Yes.

Q: You were telling about when you started to vote. It was interesting. Before we started taping. Let's go through that just a bit again. You started to vote, you decided to register in-- ?

Knowles: 1915.

Q: This makes you right now the oldest voter in Eastham, registered voter?

Knowles: Yes. You probably won't see that in the paper.

Q: Well, we might.

Knowles: I was telling about-- what's her name up there, works to register voters? Who held the registration to vote the longest? Perhaps you read it?

Q: No, I haven't read it.

Knowles: You didn't read it? And she comes up with a man here sixty-three years, a registered voter, and still a resident and living in Eastham. Charles Attwood.

Sadie Flint: I did too. I read that.

Q: And the gentleman has been dead for fifteen years?

Knowles: Been dead for about fifteen years.

Sadie Flint: For some time.

Q: We decided they needed to update their records just a bit.

But when you started to vote, where would you go? Where was the place to vote?

Knowles: Town Hall.

Q: The Town Hall that's on the corner of 6 and next to the school building?

Knowles: Right at the end of the street.

Q: Oh, our own Town Hall?

Knowles: Yes. Yes.

Q: When did they build it? When did they build that Town Hall?

Knowles: They built it in 1912. They started it, I guess-- that's when it was dedicated, was 1912. See, the Grange was organized in 1912 in the old Town Hall. The next meeting was 1913 in the new one.

Q: And the front part of it was built first?

Knowles: Yes, and the addition was put on in '51. That's when we invited the Mayor of England over here to celebrate the 300th anniversary. He and his wife, I guess for a week. You remember, Sadie. You know, that's one of the best weeks in the world.

Sadie Flint: Beautiful.

Knowles: Beautiful weather. The thing that interested me most was when the head of the-- the marshall or the-- I guess it was Mr.

Young, the head of that committee. You was on that committee, weren't you?

Sadie: No.

Knowles: No? There were fifteen on it for two years, planning. At that time Route 6 ran right straight down, right up over a hill. It didn't go around the way it goes out on the traffic lights . And he said to me-- I was sitting in the car there with Brownie, we had a radio in the car, going down to the library-- set your watch like mine. All right. Now, he says, right on the minute of two o'clock, you keep your eye up there and you're going to see four horses' heads, right on the dot of two o'clock.

Well, he had all of that Nauset part of that parade stuff. They had done a wonderful job. Right on the minute, Brownie and I looked up. My God, there were those four horses . And that's the first time that I ever saw any parade that I attended start on time. Most of them are late. That was right on the minute.

Q: Now this would be 1951' ?

Knowles: And I don't know of any space that you could find that you could put a car. We got it going and got a of trouble right out here, Samoset and Bridge. Big bus was stuck right out in front here. And everything was held up. Route 6 was shut off from way down in by the Sheraton . Traffic all

coming the back way going to Orleans. Phil Deschamps was a special from Orleans working with me.

And we got down there and, my God, a woman had a car in-- she didn't make it. Phil said, well, you get out, let me get in there and see what I can do for you. I don't know how he got that car by that bus, and then another car. My God, it was just-- we got that started and got out of there.

Then there was a convertible out front there. Had a trailer in back of it. And here was a woman standing up there, hollering "I'm pregnant. I'm going to have a baby. I'm going to have a baby. I've got to have a doctor." Now what are you going to do, huh?

Q: Right in the middle of the parade.

Knowles: Yes, right there on that corner. And we're trying to clear the road, see. And she was screeching her head off. And finally-- I'll never forget-- Phil said, "For God's sakes, get out and have it." (LAUGHTER) About drive you wild. She's standing there and hollering her head off, you know. "I'm going to have a baby. I'm going to have a baby. I've got to have a doctor." He said, "Well, sit down and have it."

And that's the trouble we had the whole damn weekend. You couldn't get a car-- I couldn't get in my own driveway. My lawn, everywhere you have a car.

Q: All right. Now, what day and what month and what year?

Knowles: That was-- now, let me see. I have to go back a little

bit. That was 1951. I think the parade was in July.

Sadie: I think so.

Q: It was right in the middle of the summer?

Knowles: Yes. It started right in the middle of the summer, because I had a lot of trouble about that time.

Q: You know what other things they had? Activities?

Knowles: It was a whole week. Started on a Sunday and ended on the next Sunday. Everything going on, and we had a big pageant down here at the First Encounter. And it's interesting to me, other people would know-- you've been down to the First Encounter now? Well, you know all that sand out there. We had fifteen hundred cars out there where that sand is. Only it wasn't there then. It was there then, but it's filled up since. The storms and things have washed that back to where it is right now, and they never bothered-- and look at the way it's made up.

So I worked down there. We had fifteen hundred chairs set down there. Now, that little rock up on that hill there, the monument there, whatever that is, I think the first step, path up to that rock is right in line with what the ^{was} are now, and we ~~walked~~ ^{walked} the other side of that with fifteen hundred chairs and the cars. And we had all the cars parked in the fields on the top here, this side of the Four Corners.

So I went to see Harry Young. I said, my God, Harry, we've

got to do something. We've got to have transportation, to get these fellows down to First Encounter.

He picks up the telephone, calls New England Bus Company, and asks if there are any buses. They sent two buses down. And, my God, I think they made about sixty trips. People first thought they'd have to pay. They had a hard time convincing them they didn't. Get in the bus and ride down, they ain't going to walk. And I think they made sixty trips down there. The whole place was full.

Q: Do you remember what the subject of the pageant was?

Knowles: I don't know.

Q: Was it about the Indians?

Sadie: I think it was.

Knowles: I don't know. I think it was some play. I don't know. I was too busy.

Q: You were too busy worrying about what people were going to do.

Knowles: So after that was over-- I think it was Friday night-- in going out and getting rid of the traffic, Harry Young-- of course, he was the chairman of the committee

the cars, and he said, you go up to Orleans, you fellows, all you officers-- they had fourteen of them-- go to Orleans Inn-- yes, I guess it was Orleans Inn then-- and have a

big dinner and blowout on us. All right.

So all these Orleans guys were down and we all piled into a New England bus, and we parked it up there on the hill, right opposite-- you know where the Goose Hummock Shop is. And we'd get out, all in uniform, and some people were coming out and somebody said-- I don't know whether they saw the people coming out of there. Said, what's all this?

said, we're going to raid this place. My God, didn't they get out of there. (LAUGHTER)

So we all marched in and we went into the dining room, and come to find out, the committee was in the other room.

Boy, you should see them scatter.

Q: When did you become the police chief?

Knowles: 1954. No, '55, but I wasn't on permanent. I was a special for eight years. You see, over the log we established the Police Department I think it was '97. In '97 they automatically made the Chairman of the Selectmen the Chief of Police of any town that didn't have a Police Department. I asked for that when I made out the Civilian Defense for the war. That was quite something too.

Q: Tell us about that.

Knowles: Well, I was working around here and there. This town was-- Ralph Chase Chase was--

(TELEPHONE INTERRUPTION)

Knowles: And we didn't have any director for it. Seven months behind. The rest

And finally the Fire Department got a little interested and wrote to Boston and asked them why, and they sent a man down here from Boston and he give a talk, and then the whole hall was full.

Q: People were worried about their defense?

Knowles: Yes. Jammed full. And Ralph said that he couldn't find anyone that would take the job. He had one fellow appointed and a week later he resigned, and since that time he hadn't been able to locate anybody. So he asked for volunteers and he didn't get any response.

And then he introduced the speaker. Well, he laid the cards right on the table. We were set up with Wellfleet. The two towns were supposed to be together. Well, we never went down. Eastham never went down. We always went up. We always tied in with Orleans. So that didn't matter either way there, during this part, but they was about six months ahead of us. Programs all set up and we didn't have it set up.

So Ralph asked a couple of times for volunteers and no reply. So this fellow in his speech, he explained the whole thing out. And he asked for volunteers a couple of times, and nobody responded. And finally he finished his speech and he said, well, I have nothing to do now but go back and report to headquarters that the Town of Eastham does not want to protect itself.

They let him go. Till he put his hand on the door to go out and I stopped him and I volunteered to take it.

And I set up the whole business, we got a chance to in with Orleans, and they were in a kind of a mess, so we were tied together and that's the way that thing started up.

So I asked ~~this~~ the Selectmen ~~man~~ to make me not a special, make me as a police officer. He said, I have to use it on civilian defense. Now the difference in that, a special, is a special can only do what he's told to do. And I didn't think Maurice Wiley knew what to do anyway, as far as that was concerned. Poor Wiley didn't know anything about the police one way or another, but he had to be Chief. He had nothing to do with it.

So they made me the full-time police, and then it went on. I don't know what happened. They changed that from '97. Oh, I know. It was the Rules and Regulations, that the Chief of Police is supposed to make Rules and Regulations, and he hadn't done it and he wasn't going to do it. And I said, then we've got to change. So now, I think it was two years-- yes, I think it was '56, I think, when we changed from 97 to 97-A. That gives the Chief of Police full authority to make the Rules and Regulations to protect this town.

And we went out-- it got pretty expensive-- on call. While they wasn't criticized, when I was out on call I got carpenter's wages instead of fifty cents an hour from the Town, and they upheld that. But I said, well, all you've got to do, if you want, there's

nothing in that budget that figures extra work. It's buy me a car and give me a permanent job. So they went to figuring on that. So here they are real glad, upped my budget five hundred dollars and told me how to come about to buy a police car, and that's when we were started in '54. Then we changed to that full authority in '56. Then we formed the Police Association, which is still going.

This thing on the wall there-- after twelve years the Association presented me with that last May, that placque there. And another one, that hung over to the other house, that has my full record on it.

Q: You were appreciated.

Knowles: Yes. That's when you get your reward sometimes, after you're all through.

Q: The police station then was built after?

Knowles: I had a station, my police station down the back stairs of the Town Hall. You know where they are?

Q: I do.

Knowles: In that little room. They got it open now. I built an office in there while I was waiting for the car. And you know we bought a Chevrolet coupe? All bottom was weather-proofed and everything else for six hundred dollars.

Q: Amazing. Was it a brand-new car?

Knowles: Yeah. Got a new car every year. And that was 1965. Yeah, when we got the station. They built a new station for the police out of the garage, and so we got busy and got an architect and got some drawings to build that over. All finished and little everything. A nice/station for the time and it worked in there very good.

So it come along-- I had a blackout spell, fell down the stairs. That was early in '65, I guess. Went down and broke my arm and was in the hospital for five days and one thing and another, and that was and limped around here and there.

When we first started, 'cause the town went on pension stuff, and my name was on the record. I wasn't making any money, but anybody, his name was on the town roll, had the privilege of signing a waiver to join the pension. And I'd worked for nothing. This was back in '38. I said, well, we worked for nothing, I haven't got no paper

sheriff for forty-three years and didn't have a job during that time. So it was a pretty good town.

I've got a silent moment here. I've got to get a-hold of that one. When it comes to me, I'll let you know.

Q: All right. I was interested in how many cars. As long as you were Police Chief, was there always just the one police car?

Knowles: No. Yes, there was just one when I was-- I'm back on the track again.

So I didn't have any pension. I got the insurance, but they didn't take out five per cent for the pension, because there was nothing to it. So it come time now in '46, I get a big payroll. I get twenty-six dollars for police work in '46. So ~~xx~~ when it come time to retire, and I had that accident and I bunged up a little bit, and I was 62, I think, when I went in as Chief-- and that's about the time they kicked them out of the service, before they're 62-- and the auditors picked it up that I was sposed to get out of there at 65. And they checked it out and come down and raised hell about it, and come to find out that I waived the pension, I wasn't working on pension.

So when I was 75 I was bunged up a little bit. I started out to the station one day, you know, and God, my cold. And I went into the Town Hall and some cars went by, and I went into the Town Hall and talking with Belle. I says, well, Belle, I made up my mind to something. She says, what? I'm going to retire. She says, why? Well, I says, something's happened coming over here to the station. And put myself in the position of driving along the highway. Here I am, all runted over, you know, trying to get over to Town Hall to the Police Station. What I would think and what I would say if I were driving through a town and I saw that, I'd say, why in the hell don't that old so-and-so get the hell out of the service? Too old to be a police officer and here he's stickin' around. And I said, that's my reason for

retiring. Well, you don't have to. I said, I know that, but I can't stand on that one. And just the last thing, if I was struck in trying to get over here to the station, I know what people would say going down the highway, and I'd say the same thing. Naturally, you would, wouldn't you?

Q: How old were you at this point?

Knowles: Seventy-five.

Q: That's marvelous. I'm sure the town has always regretted that you had to retire then.

Knowles: Yeah, well-- there's been some very nice things said.

Q: I've heard them all, I think.

Knowles: The end of the year come on, they give me a good testimonial dinner. They give me a big barometer. They give me a big dinner, a check for five hundred dollars, they give me a nice radio and one thing and another, you know.

And Jerry come over that night to the house. My wife was sick at the time in December, so I didn't make too association with him, to meet the -- I formed that association years ago

, I didn't happen to be there and it worked out pretty good. He come to the house one night, meeting night, and he said, I want to tell you something. You're

going to hear about it tonight, but I thought I'd warn you a little ahead of time. He said, the town has put through a bill to give you an annuity of three thousand dollars a year. And the answer has come back, they would only grant two, because that's the law. They couldn't grant the three. They only grant two thousand dollars annuity, for as long as I live.

Q: That's real appreciation.

Knowles: I thought that was

why the hell I'm working for.

Q: In all the years that you were the Police Department in town, a lot of the people who voted this were thinking of times when you had helped them.

Knowles: Well, that could be.

Q: Were there some funny stories through those years? There have to be.

Knowles: Well, you know, I was in the-- do you know Nelson, the Selectman ~~that~~ that resigned? Nice guy. And I hadn't seen him. I didn't know him too well. He come in one day and we got to talking. And he said, you know, I've heard some things about you. I says, funny thing, that came to me, that anybody that told you that would tell me what's being said about me.

I said, what did you hear? Well, he said, I heard you were sneaky. You were hidden away behind places, that you wasn't just fair.

Oh, I never heard that. I was always fair. I'll have to agree I guess I was sneaky. But, I said, I'll tell you something. Any game I get into play, I play to win. Never mind how I play it, I play it to win. I happened to win on this one.

I said, you know, you talk about sneaky people. I met some of the best people in the world, I guess. Wonderful people, on the highway. Always give~~x~~ them a citation. A warning, first offense, but when I caught them the second time within ten minutes, they got a seven-day suspension of their license.

I said, well, you talk about sneaks. You don't know 'em. Nicest people in this world will tell you the damndest lies and things you ever saw.

I was out there one day and I had a sign out here, my house for sale for nine years. That's when I found fault about a federal sign. Temporary sign or permanent , what's the difference, that's been for nine years. That damned old stick is getting sprouts on it.

Fellow stopped me one day-- I stopped him, going like a bat out of hell. He says, I've just been down to your house, been by it. I'm in a hurry to go home and get my wife and come back and show her the house. I said, let's see your license and registration.

I wrote him out.

I recommended he lose his license.

He said, you give me that when I want to buy your house? I says, that's nothing to do with me. The house is one thing, a police officer is another. I'm a police officer now. He hadn't been in the house at all.

I come home and said something to the wife about it. She said, nobody's been here.

Q: Isn't that something?

Knowles:

I said, I play to win, and I happened to win.

Q: What about kids when they're growing up and they all make mistakes? I can imagine your handling.

Knowles: Well, those things-- you learn a lot as you go along. We used to work on juveniles in a lot of different ways. Ordinarily, you give a juvenile a ticket-- ^{go see} ~~off/court~~ his parents the next morning, and that's where you made a mistake. That's when you wish you hadn't gone, 'cause they'll just lay you down flat.

So to do away with that, I come up with a new policy. When we got 'em, I take them down to the Police Station, call the parents to come and get them.

And they'd come. All right, now your father and mother are here. One, two o'clock in the morning, sometimes along there. You tell them why you're here. If you slip on anything, we'll prompt you.

That helped the boy quite a lot.

I put up my own foundation. You hear about-- read in the courts, you know, on probation. They get a six-month probation. That way you have to report to the probation officer every month.

So I talked with some of the parents and told them what I wanted to do. I wanted to put them on probation. And I

all right, you're starting out Monday morning. I want to know what you're doing and where you've been every minute till next week. Next Sunday night I want you to bring a report to my house at six o'clock. Not one minute after. By six o'clock. And you're going to do that for six weeks.

I had four of them. By God, they worked on-- one fellow come in one time, he didn't have what-- I says, you didn't put in there whom you was with. Take it home and rewrite it.

Now, two of those guys-- one of them always called me his father, 'cause I was so good to him. Another fellow used to appreciate it. I did a lot for that kid. I even sent him to Boston to a school of speech, got the training, and he always thanked me every time he saw me for what I did for him. He turned out to be a carpenter, and the other fellow I think's a barber. Those two-- I don't know what become of the other two. I guess they moved out of town for some reason.

But that's the way it worked out. It worked out very good for those kids. It made some of them over. One of them had been

thrown out of school. We got him back in school, because he wasn't to blame for what he'd been thrown out for. It took a lot of doing, but the kid deserved it and he was doing all right. And that worked too.

But what I think worked the best, Sadie, was making the parents come after them, because they're no saying the next morning, well, my boy wouldn't do that. You know.

Q: 'Cause he was there and they saw him.

Knowles: You get it right from the boy, right then and there. No we'll see about it later. And they couldn't imagine, it's their own son telling them.

Q: Before this tape gives out, I'm interested in how you became the Town Moderator.

Knowles: How?

Q: Yes. How? When? It was like being the Defense of Eastham?

Knowles: Yes, something like that. To be truthful on that deal, I guess the reason-- poor Ralph, I always give him credit-- that you might call it that perhaps I wasn't all that good friendly terms with the Selectmen. Foster Atwood -- you know Foster-- he and I were a little-- they said a bit socko when we were together. And we used to question a lot of things. Like election night, you go in to vote. When they got ready to count the ballots, they'd close the door. Well, a law was passed that

you couldn't count ballots behind closed doors.

So a bunch of us waiting for the count, you know, and they , went in and closed the door.. They were going to count the ballots, and we opened it. And they come and closed it, they said, leave that door closed. All right, we'll do that, but you'll stop counting right now. Didn't even know the law had changed.

So we opened the door. They did their best, the men, you know. They don't want to get beat. It kind of hurt a little bit. A lot of things happened here and there, the town. They was just a little bit odd, but I used to go after what I wanted. Now, it's just the same with WPA work there, during the depression. I'd work on the road quite a lot. There was various times. I went in and asked for the job to be foreman. I said, you've got to have someone. I'm the only one that's got the experience, because I worked on town roads, I know what we're doing.

Then they appointed a guy as my time-keeper who hardly could write his own name. And said, you take your time sheet in, say Winnie will help you. I says, thanks, Ralph. .

So I was the only one I guess in town that didn't ask to be on that Civil Defense, and that's why I . they
And then Town Meeting, I was accused as a guy who makes a lot of fuss in Town Meeting, and I asked for the job. Now, that's a big question. Did I or didn't I? It don't make no difference, I said.

Ain't nobody in this town had guts enough to offer.

So I went in. That was the middle thirties, and I was in there, lasted through the forties, up to '54. Sixteen years. A lot of people liked it, some people didn't.

Q: What does it mean to be the Moderator? Is it just the Town Meeting?

Knowles: Well, you have the Town Meeting, and then, of course, the action that they take on it. There's a lot of ways to do it. Our town is the only town I know of that our Town Meetings, in the Town By-Laws, are to be conducted under the Cushing Manual of Parliamentary Law. Most of the towns it's just the Moderator. He's the law. He can do what he wants to do and that's it.

under parliamentary law

Q: And you were Town Moderator for sixteen years?

Knowles: Yes.

Q: And that's an elected job?

Knowles: Yes,

Well, you had to be voted in anyway. Of course, you can't lose if nobody else runs against you, can you? (LAUGHTER) I figured that was a good idea.

Q: And in that process , then you became the Police

Chief during that time?

Knowles: Yes, I was Moderator. There was a funny thing, you know. They said to me, well, now what are you going to do about Police Chief? I said, there's no law that says I can't carry on as Moderator, but if you people don't think I should-- it's only ten dollars a year. I said, eleven Meetings one year, in 1936, when they built the new school. My God, that's all we had was Town Meetings from 1934 till they got that schoolhouse built down there.

The thought's gone again now. That's old age.

Q: That's okay. You're doing beautifully. You were saying that the two jobs at one time--

Knowles: Oh, yeah. See, they come back. Sometimes I have to make a telephone call and tell people when it comes back to me.

In that job-- so I said, well, naturally I'd give up ten dollars. That year I started out at thirty-five hundred a year salary. But when they got in trouble with the Moderator--

Moderator, Mr. Bernard Collins, the poor devil--

called me and wanted me to run for Moderator. And Bernard said, well, you know you can do it, if you want to. I said, I knew it in the first place. I told you, but that didn't go, so I'll have nothing to do with Moderator any more. Get somebody else.

You know it's a funny thing. I don't know the guy who's Moderator now, but his first Town Meeting, and the next morning there's three guys that came to the house. Said, he made a decision

last night in Town Meeting. I didn't go. It's too far to walk. I can't make it up at the school. And we think he's wrong. I said, what's the matter? Well, he took three votes and we feel he didn't have to take but one. They told me what it was. I said, he's right.

Now, that one subject, in sixteen years I had it once, and he gets it the very first night. I said, if he knows that, it's an amendment on an amendment, how you handle it. And he was right. I said, well, you've got to give him credit. That's his first one, and I hit it once in sixteen years. And he gets it his first meeting. So I don't know--

Q: I wanted to ask you about Prohibition on the Cape. Prohibition, when they passed the Amendment that you couldn't have liquor.

Knowles: That on the Cape?

Q: Yes. I was wondering what it was like?

Knowles: I didn't hear about that.

Q: If anybody smuggled liquor or anything like that during the time when the law said you couldn't have it?

Knowles: When was that? Do you know, Sadie? You should know.

Q: I think they passed the Amendment about 1920, 1922 or so.

Knowles: The Amendment was what, you say?

Q: To keep people from selling liquor, so that it was illegal to have it.

Knowles: Why would you ask me a question like that? Huh? (LAUGHTER)
What are you laughing at?

Q: I'm just wondering. I always think it's interesting to know how people smuggle and all the things I do.

Knowles: Why would I know?

Q: I don't know. I just thought maybe--

Knowles: Yeah, I know.

Q: I just wondered what it was like on the Cape when people were prohibited from buying liquor?

Knowles: Cape people, if they couldn't buy liquor, why naturally they'd go without it.

Q: I guess Eastham was dry and other places were not. Was this after Prohibition passed?

Knowles: Well, Eastham was dry for a long time. There was an old drunk in town. He'd drink a bottle of liquor, they had to vote dry.

Q: Why Eastham was dry. Because one person drank it up. (LAUGHTER)

Knowles: Yeah. I come from work one night and stopped at
Judah Eldredge's Garage, Sadie, and

says, got a friend of yours out around here. Harry. It was light rain. He was on the ground out back of the garage with a ~~1/2~~ loaf of bread for a pillow. Carried him home, and he says, you know, I drank up all the liquor in Eastham and they didn't have any, so I had to go to Orleans. Got drunk and fell down out there back of the

Q: So this is one of the things you did as Police Chief too, is take care of people.

One of the thoughts here that I wondered if you could put into words is what your philosophy of life has been over the years?

Knowles: Whew! Want to come again some day? (LAUGHTER)

Q: For another hour and a half? You certainly have believed in fairness all your life.

Knowles: Well, I always believed that way. I always believed in doing what I say I'm going to do. Honesty, I guess.

Sadie: You ~~do~~ didn't mention the Grange, Winny.

Knowles: Oh, that's right too.

Q: You said they were organized in 1912.

Knowles: That was in 1912 and I was elected Master in 1916. '16 and '17. Again in 1919 and again in 1924. The last time in 1935. Now during the period from 1919, it was 1924, I received a letter

from the Master of the Massachusetts State Grange, a Christmas present. Deputy Master of the State Grange. Providing I could pass an examination.

The examination would be on New Year's Day in the Hotel Bellevue in Boston at eight o'clock in the morning. Be there. Now, Sadie, ~~thirty-~~ ^{two} took that examination. I don't know how many people they wanted. And we didn't leave the hotel. We had lunch. I got out of there at five o'clock at night on the examination. Organizer was the Agricultural Society.

Q: What did you actually do in the Grange?

Knowles: What did I ask them to do?

Q: No, what did each Grange do?

Knowles: Well, they didn't do what they-- they made a more of a social of it than they did what it was really organized for, because the organization was the groups. Now, you could buy stuff through the Grange wholesale. I mean, you could save a lot of money if you bought through the Grange.

Now, I know I went in one time-- of course, the asparagus, the whole town was asparagus farming. Shipped carload after carload of it every night. And you could buy fertilizer for half price that you paid the dealer, see.

Well, what the hell you gonna do, Sadie? I go in there-- I got three guys selling fertilizer right in town, and I'm trying

to get it away from them through the Grange.

But you got to buy in groups. You get together and order a carload. Christ, we used two or three carloads of fertilizer on asparagus those times. And they can buy it about half price through the farmers' organizations.

But in doing that, you got three people in town selling fertilizer, if you're going to do that, then they're going to .

Q: And get provoked with you? No?

Knowles: And groceries or anything you want, you can do the same thing with groceries--

Q: Like a cooperative.

Knowles: You can get together, give your order in, put your money in, and they'd ship it to you.